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Directors Discuss the Future of Regional Theological Education

Prior to General Synod 28

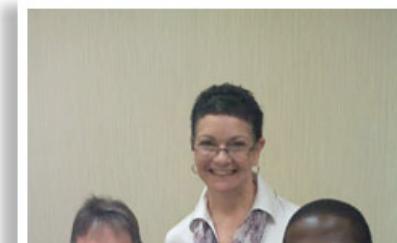
"The future of the church depends on theological education," is a statement made recently by Daniel Aleshire, the head of the Association of Theological Schools. Aleshire continues, "The future is now ... and it is promising!"

On the Friday before General Synod in Tampa, Florida, the deans and directors of regional theological education programs met to discuss the future and how we are living into it creatively and collaboratively. Kathy Clark, Associate Conference Minister for Ministry Formation and Leadership Development, director of the Theology Among the People (TAP) program and developer of its newest incarnation, PATHWAYS, participated representing the Southeast Conference.



In the SEC, our future is linked to a past that spans not only time, but also continents. The TAP program, now in its 12th year, was developed by the Rev. Dr. Richard Sales based on his work in Theological Education by Extension (TEE) that began over 30 years ago in southern Africa. The legacy of his work continues not only in the SEC where we are committed to leadership development that transforms churches and transforms lives, but also lives on in several vital programs in Africa, including Theological Education by Extension College located in Johannesburg, South Africa. When Kathy was in Africa in the fall of 2010, she had the opportunity to visit the TEE College and learn of their extensive work. As it happened, the director of that program, Ms. Megan Baxter, attended General Synod as a guest of Global Ministries. In a happy reunion, Kathy met up again with Ms. Baxter when she participated in the meeting of

theological educators, at Kathy's suggestion, to share about her work. Ms. Baxter inspired the group with stories of the impact that TEE has throughout southern Africa, where thousands of lay and authorized ministers are trained annually to lead a vital and revitalizing church. (For

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[UCC contingent among 5,000 rallying to 'Save Our Schools'](#)
Janice Resseger calls public schools "the primary civic institution in every community in this country." But she fears that Americans have "forgotten why justice in public education matters."





more information about TEE
College South Africa.)

While in Tampa, the group discussed best practices in assessing programs and learning outcomes. This is an important issue particularly as it relates to programs that not only provide lay enrichment but also equip individuals for licensed and

ordained ministry in the UCC. Barbara Blodgett of Local Church Ministry's Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team led the lively discussion. The group intends to follow up by developing guidelines for program assessment and a peer review process.

Providing excellence in leadership development is a responsibility that belongs to the whole church and this group hopes to add to the conversation among educators, Committees on Ministry, and local churches. The group will meet again in 2012 to continue to discuss ways to share resources and collaborate across conferences as together we seek to form leaders for the future of God's church.

[Link Here](#) for some Continuing Education Opportunities - Grants for Pastors from the Louisville Institute

In photo above left, Kathy Clark (standing) reunites with Megan Baxter, Director of the Theological Education by Extension College of South Africa, and Prince Dibela, head of the United Church of Southern Africa, at the UCC General Synod in Tampa, FL. Baxter and Dibela are partners in Global Missions. Kathy met them on a Global Ministries sponsored trip to Africa in 2010.

In photo above right, Ms. Megan Baxter, Director of Theological Education by Extension College in South Africa, addresses a gathering of UCC educators prior to General Synod in Tampa.

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